

Features of metaphors in song discourse based on the texts of rock musicians

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Abstract. This article is devoted to the study of some linguistic and stylistic features of the English and Russian-language song discourse. The study is based on examples taken from the rock band songs. The lyrics of the songs were analyzed for the use of such a linguistic means of expression as metaphor. Research has shown that both Russian and English-speaking authors often use this linguo-stylistic means of expressiveness during the writing of their musical works to give euphony, a special expressive coloring and to convey their emotional state. It was revealed that song lyrics are an important element of musical culture and can convey to listeners not only musical, but also socio-political and philosophical ideas, while using various metaphorical constructions to give a vivid image. The article considers the impact on the imagination, emotions of the Russian and English-speaking listener through the use of metaphor and how this linguistic means draws attention to a certain feature of the described phenomenon and reflects the author's attitude to the text.

1 Introduction

For many years, linguists have struggled to define discourse. In the early part of the last century, researchers focused on the function of language, but later they began to explore its purpose. Discourse is a complex concept to study as it exists at the intersection of spoken and written communication [1].

The theory of discourse is a multidisciplinary field that draws on various disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology, sociology, and philosophy. This interdisciplinary approach helps us understand the intricate interactions between individuals and their social and cultural context.

By analyzing communication patterns and structures, we can gain insights into how discourse impacts society. Discourse analysis also allows us to develop new ideas and methodologies for studying communication processes, language, culture, and social relationships [2, 3]. The concept of discourse is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on various fields such as linguistics, psychology, and pedagogy to form the theoretical basis

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for teaching foreign languages. These fields contribute to the unification of research in the humanities, but despite its significance, the definition of discourse remains elusive and controversial among scholars.

A song being an integral part of the modern world plays an important role in human life. It reflects the person's inner world, his state of mind. The relevance of the article is determined by the significance of song discourse as a popular branch of art as well as the lack of its sufficient study that makes it attractive in the modern field of linguistic research. Song discourse, as a generic concept in relation to song lyrics, is characterized by certain linguistic features reflecting the culture of representatives of a particular country. At the same time, the song discourse may differ, it depends on the language in which it is written and performed [4, 5]. The purpose of the work is to analyze some linguistic and stylistic features of English-speaking and Russian-speaking song discourses based on the material of rock band songs, particularly to study the use of metaphors in songs. It is common knowledge the concept of "discourse" is not fully investigated and therefore is interpreted differently by researchers. Mainly "discourse" as an important communicative phenomenon is considered to be a linguistic form consisting of a text and its linguistic components [6]. Thus, discourse is not simply communication between speakers. It has goals and specific participants with their own social, psychological, national-cultural, and status characteristics. The type of discourse determines the goals and participants that will be involved in it.

In linguistics, discourse refers to the process of face-to-face communication, which involves a deviation from written language. It demonstrates mutual understanding between interlocutors in a discussion. N.D. Arutyunova defines discourse as "a coherent text combined with extralinguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological, and other factors; a text viewed in its conceptual aspect; speech regarded as a purposeful social activity, as a component of human interaction and the mechanisms underlying human consciousness (cognitive processes)" [7]. V. G. Skripko understands discourse as non-verbal and paralinguistic interactions between people within a specific context [8]. We will use this common definition and consider discourse to be a set of connected texts that are linked semantically and communicatively. In this study, we will be considering the concept of song discourse. Song discourse can take on different styles and genres, each with its own unique musical elements, lyrical content, and objectives. Popular music, for instance, often features lighter, more straightforward lyrics that aim to provide entertainment for the audience. In contrast, rock music may employ more complex lyrics and intricate musical arrangements to convey socio-political ideas. Song discourse is one of the most interesting and challenging topics for modern researchers to explore. The challenge lies in the fact that song discourse texts are a combination of musical and linguistic elements. In the framework of this investigation, song discourse will be regarded as one of the main ways to preserve and transmit cultural heritage, reflecting values and norms passed down from generation to generation. The texts of songs have their own unique artistic form and play a significant role in the development of the aesthetic and moral values of individuals. However, there are many aspects that require further study and reflection. This study focuses on the uniqueness of the rock genre. Rock lyrics glorify values such as spontaneity, freedom from social conventions and stereotypes, and a natural approach to life.

The sound of rock is energetic, with strong rhythms and memorable melodies. Lyrics often address social and political issues, as well as the personal experiences of the musicians [9].

The texts of English and Russian rock songs are a set of texts with certain characteristics. They include thematic, lexical and syntactic aspects which turned to be the main means of communication coming from the author and performer. The meaning of any

song is a subject of investigation and interpretation, and each genre sets its own rules for communication.

2 Methods and types of discourse analysis

The research is conducted within the framework of synchronic analysis. In the work, the following research methods are employed: analysis, comparative method, and discourse analysis.

The discourse analysis helps us understand the relationships between a subject, communication, and culture, leading to new insights into the study of communication processes. The main purpose of the song lyrics is to create an aesthetic experience for the listener. It is accomplished through the close connection between the lyrics, melody, performance style, and the performer's individuality. It happens because the fundamental ideas and concepts of culture are often expressed through its texts [10], and rock music is no exception. Rock music is characterized by its use of strong and emotional language, often associated with social and political issues. The lyrics of rock songs can be provocative, arousing public opinion and expressing the artist's individuality and independence.

Rock artists use their music to convey their thoughts and feelings, often in an aggressive or defiant manner, or in a melancholic and profound way. The music itself is energetic and passionate, reflecting the energy and passion of the artist.

English-language and Russian-language song discourses have their own unique characteristics, which are influenced by the cultural, linguistic, and musical traditions of their respective countries. One of the main differences between these two types of songs is the use of different musical genres. English music often features genres such as rock, pop, hip hop, country, and more, while Russian music tends to focus on pop music, chanson (a Russian genre), Russian rock and rap. English songs often use more complex metaphors and imagery, which can be challenging for non-native speakers. In contrast, Russian songs often employ simpler images and metaphors. The study of metaphor has been a popular topic in linguistics, and many Russian and international linguists have researched this concept [11, 12]. But to date, there have been disagreements among scientists regarding the linguistic understanding of metaphors. The basis of the linguistic theory of metaphor lies in a definition that emerged during the time of Aristotle. He coined the term "metaphor" in accordance with his view of art as a form of imitation of reality. In his work "Poetics", Aristotle formulated the theory of metaphor for the first time, describing different types of metaphors. According to his definition, a metaphor is an unusual word that has been transferred from one class of things to another, either from a general to a specific or vice versa. "The figurative word (metaphor) is an unusual name transferred from genus to species or from species to species" [13].

3 Results and analysis of the features of English- and Russian-language song discourses

In the practical part of this study, we revealed the linguistic and stylistic differences between English-speaking and Russian-speaking songs. In order to analyze these features of English- and Russian-language song discourses, we have selected the texts of songs by the following English-language rock groups: "Queen", "The Beatles", "Arctic Monkeys" and "Skillet", as well as the Russian-language bands "Aria", "Kiplov", "Splín" and "Bi-2".

The reason for this choice is that it will allow us to study in detail the peculiarities of culture, mentality, and language based on the songs of different generations of artists.

Lexical means are the words and phrases used in a language to convey a specific meaning or concept [5]. These words make up the lexical inventory of a language and are categorized into different groups. In song lyrics, lexical means can be used to both convey specific information and create an atmosphere or mood within the song. It is essential to use these lexical devices accurately in order to achieve musical and linguistic harmony within a song.

Our research showed that songwriters often use various linguistic and stylistic techniques to create euphonic and expressive music. The most common technique used in both genres is metaphor.

As a result, we found that the lyrics of rock songs have unique characteristics that set them apart from other genres. They often include socio-political, philosophical ideas, and reflect the emotions and moods of the songwriter. In general, this work has allowed us to identify the linguistic and stylistic characteristics of song discourse, based on the analysis of rock music lyrics. The study has shown that song lyrics play an important role in musical culture, as they can convey not only musical ideas, but also social, political and philosophical concepts to listeners.

A metaphor is a type of trope, a figure of speech that describes one thing by comparing it to another [14]. Metaphors are a common way of linguistic expression in the texts of English-language song discourse. The lyrics of the band “Queen”, for example, often use metaphors to convey their message, and are no exception in this sense:

1. *I got a lot of water in my brain [15].*

The metaphor in the line of the song “Somebody to Love” conveys to listeners the idea that the person singing the song is so obsessed with the desire to find true love and escape the feeling of loneliness that he loses touch with reality ignoring the external world. He focuses only on achieving his ultimate goal of finding a soul mate, a life partner.

In the example from the song “If I Fell”, by The Beatles,

2. *If I fell in love with you, would you promise to be true? [15].*

The phrase “to fall in love” is a figurative expression that, when translated literally, means “to fall in love” or “to become enamored”. It refers to the experience of falling deeply in love with another person.

The following metaphors are expressive and unpredictable:

3. *She's got the devil in her heart*

No, no, this I can't believe [15].

The title of the song, “Devil in Her Heart”, hints at the central theme - the woman, the protagonist is in love with, is not as innocent as he initially believed. This metaphor indicates that the girl’s intentions are not so pure as they seem to be.

In the song “Awake and Alive” by Skillet, a metaphor is presented in the line:

4. *You breathe into me at last... [15].*

God breathes life into a man. This story is about a person who loses faith and dies in his soul. But this faith is renewed and he is brought to life again.

Russian songs demonstrate the great number of metaphors. The extensive usage of metaphorical language is observed in the following examples:

5. *Змей продолжает свой танец*

Влажных тугих колец

Толпа встает на колени -

Стадо тупых овец [16].

The new ruler has ascended the throne and begins to govern according to his own principles. Despite the oppressive policies of the “tyrant”, the people are still suppressed and like “a flock of sheep” are led by one, who controls them.

6. *Мы не знаем, кто мы – дети красной звезды,*

Дети черной звезды или новых могил [16].

The song “Time of trouble” was composed during the period of significant changes happening in the country. The uncertainty in the Soviet Union influenced the author a lot. Having searched for his identity he tried to find out whether he was Soviet or not. The dissolution of the Soviet Union meant death for the author as well as for a lot of people, it represented the loss of stability and purpose in life since it signified everything was believed to come to an end.

7. *Но даже в час смерти не стану другим,*

И никто не поставит мне крест,

Я буду свободным, но трижды чужим [16].

A person is going to follow his own way having refused to accept the opinion of the others, having disregarded the people’s viewpoints, any other alternatives. As a result he finds himself isolated. The understanding of impossibility to find the adherents leads to a loss of faith in friendship. However, freedom is far more essential to him, so he puts his independence and his own comfort beyond friends and the family.

In the song “I am free” by Kipelov, metaphors are used in the following lines:

8. *Под холодный шепот звезд*

Мы сожгли последний мост,

И всё в бездну сорвалось [16].

The hero is going through a bitter loss, he has lost everything he had possessed. This difficult period of loss symbolizes comprehensive emptiness. “The abyss” is suggested to reveal deep depression and the hero is understood to be emotionally devastated, so he sees no point in further living. He is so concerned about his beloved that it brings him nothing but anxiety and suffering and evokes deep emotions. As a result he is frustrated and at a loss doing the right thing.

In the songs by the Split band, the following lines are metaphors:

9. *Выпавший снег никогда не растает* [17].

The author uses a metaphor to emphasize the eternity of occurring events.

10. *Мы не знали друг друга до этого лета,*

Мы болтались по свету в земле и в воде [17].

Before meeting wherever the protagonists might travel, wherever they wandered, they finally found each other.

11. *По горло в воде*

На дрейфующей льдине ждут рыбаки

Но ты пой мне еще [17].

Let the whole world wait, but the singer does not care, he is going to listen to his lover’s singing.

There are also metaphors in the lyrics of the Bi-2 band, for example, in the song “God of the Damned”:

12. *Мое поколение несет тяжкий крест* [18]

To bear a heavy cross means to patiently endure all the difficulties that arise in the course of life. In this case, these challenges fall on the shoulders of a generation of heroes.

13. *Снето-выпито, люди разные*

Закрывают глаза,

Вот осколки от горьких слёз,

Вот обломки веселых праздников [18].

Fragments of bitter tears are like drops that run down someone’s face, like sharp shards of pain. The author uses this metaphor to describe the intensity of the pain caused by these tears.

In this study, the linguistic and stylistic features of investigated song discourse were based on the material of rock music songs. The lyrics of these songs were analyzed for the use of such linguistic devices, as metaphor.

4 Conclusions

1. An analysis of the Russian and English song discourse indicates metaphors as a trope to add imagery, color to the text, making it more emotional and memorable. These stylistic devices also contribute to the creation of a rhythmic pattern and acoustic effect that helps to focus the listener's attention on important parts of the song. The usage of metaphors enhances the overall message and makes it easier for the listener to understand and remember.

2. We have carefully examined the components of "song discourse" in detail. In the process of analyzing the theoretical foundations of our research, we treated the modern song as both a verbal and a verbal-musical entity.

3. Additionally, we identified several characteristics of song discourse. The song discourse is considered to function as both written and oral communication, to combine verbal and non-verbal elements, to indicate its specific structure and syntax and its unique nature of expressiveness.

4. According to our analysis a metaphor as a lexical means of expressiveness in Russian-language songs that, on the one hand, helps the authors convey the despair and emotional emptiness as well as emotions of family loss and absence of purpose in life caused by emotions of family loss. On the other hand, this device represents acquired newfound freedom and various manifestations of love. In Russian musical discourse the theme of faith in God is often revealed indicating the connection between the human being and God as a higher power. The man is considered to be involved in nature and to have met with a series of unexplained supernatural forces. The interaction between human existence and God provides peace and serenity and helps to find answers to world's fundamental questions.

5. English musical discourse analysis makes it possible to evaluate its vast content. English-language songs are quite different being full of various feelings and emotions, especially expressing disappointment. In this sense metaphorical expressions reflect the person's inner world, his experiences and emotions. The songwriters use metaphor as a lexico-stylistic device describing faith and such feelings as love affairs or lovers' impure intentions. Studying the features of the Russian and English song discourse allows us to understand the linguistic and cultural characteristics between countries and their peoples.

6. Studying song discourse helps in better understanding music and lyrics as well as enlarging vocabulary and mastering language skills in English and Russian. It is an essential part of learning language and culture. By means of using metaphors in song discourse the songwriters create more vivid and deep content of their lyrics, making them more emotional and unique. Moreover, this approach makes it possible to appeal to wider audience.

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